

## HE PAID THE RECKONING

By MOLLIE K. WETHERELL

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A long while ago, when the people of Europe lived in an artistic atmosphere, a stranger stopped one evening at a peasant's cottage in the south of Spain and asked for supper and a night's lodging. He was made welcome and comfortable so far as these poor peasants were able to make him.

The family consisted of a man perhaps thirty-five years of age; his wife, a young woman of twenty-two or twenty-three, and their child, a boy about eight months old. While the stranger was eating his supper his eyes were constantly fixed upon the man, who sat smoking his pipe by the chimney, turning them from him to the woman who sat on the opposite side, nursing her baby. In the man's face was a certain repose, a contentment with the world and with his lot in it. The woman's, though that of a peasant, was tinged with a certain indescribable spirituality. When the child sat up in his mother's lap and looked at the guest his eyes were opened very wide, and there was an appearance of intelligence in them beyond babyhood, beyond childhood—even, it seemed at times, beyond manhood.

When the stranger had eaten his supper he said: "I shall be gone in the morning before you are up. Please tell me what is the reckoning, that I may pay it now, for my supper and my bed."

"There is nothing to be paid, señor," said the man. "What we have given you to eat, while it is good enough for us, is not good enough for a gentleman like you. At any rate, it is not of any real value. As for the bed you are to sleep on, you will fare no better than the mules. What presumption, señor, it would be for us to take money for these things. By doing so we would call down the displeasure of our patron saint."

The stranger made no reply to this, but, taking up a candle, mounted a rude staircase. In the morning, however, he was still in the cottage, coming down from his room after the peasant and his wife had breakfasted. The woman gave him what remained in the house for a meal, after which he said:

"You will not permit me to pay for your hospitality, but possibly you may accept a gift at my hands. I am an artist and will draw your likenesses."

To this the husband demurred, saying that the gentleman's time was too valuable to be spent sketching poor peasants, but the wife took a woman's view of the matter. She wished for the portraits of her husband, herself and especially her child. So she persuaded the man to sit with her and their boy for the stranger to copy.

The artist placed the woman in a chair, holding her child in a standing position, while the man stood looking over her shoulder at both her and the boy. Then from a portfolio he had with him he took out drawing materials, and, improvising an easel out of a chair, he set to work. He made a number of outline sketches of the three, also filling in separate drawings of them. When he had finished he put them away and said:

"I shall take away what I have done with me, but this," selecting one of them, "I will return to you. If you desire to improve your condition or are in need of money you may be able to sell it for a fair price."

With that the artist took up his portfolio and departed.

Some time after this when the peasant had forgotten the incident and his wife was lamenting because the artist had neglected to send the sketch a man appeared, saying that he had been sent with it by the artist. It was in a frame, and in one corner a name was written. But the name was not familiar to the peasants. They hung the picture on the wall and were very proud of it. When the neighbors came in to look at it they would be asked, "Are not the figures like us?" and the reply would be: "Yes, they are like you, but they are holy people. Your baby resembles our blessed Saviour."

The peasants kept the picture for many years. Meanwhile they grew to be old and their boy became a young man. He loved the daughter of a wine grower, but she was without dowry, and he was without any means to set up housekeeping. Then his mother remembered the artist's words that they might sell the picture for a price. Her husband had no faith in this, but the boy, who was in love, begged his mother to try. Her affection for her son triumphed over her desire to keep the sketch, and with him she went to Seville.

On reaching the city she went to a church to pray for the success of their undertaking. When they came to the altar both stood still in amazement. There before them was their sketch in painted colors inclosed in a massive frame. It represented Mary and Joseph and the infant Jesus.

The next day people gathered in knots to discuss a bit of news. A peasant woman and her son had come in from the south with the original sketch of one of the most famous of Murillo's paintings of the holy family. They did not know its value, but when a dealer told them that there were persons who would give a thousand sequins for it they were amazed. They agreed to take this amount, the dealer taking the risk of selling it at a profit. Then the two peasants went home happy.

## TALES OF RAZORBACKS.

How Hogs of This Breed Got Down a Steep Hill.

The group on the porch was talking about razorback hogs, and the storekeeper was telling a story.

"There was a feller wavelin' through here," he said. "He was a stranger in these parts. One day he come across a bunch o' haws that had big slits in their ears. He figgered at them slits. They was too big fer brands. What else could they be? After a bit a native come down the trail. 'Jess lookin' at them haws,' said the stranger. 'You was,' says the native. 'D'ye min' tellin' me what them big slits in their ears is fer?' said the stranger. 'Not at all,' says the native. 'Have you noticed these hills?' 'What d'ye mean?' 'Noticed how steep they is?' 'Yes, I have,' 'Waal,' says the native, 'that's it. We have to put them slits in the haws' ears so they kin sack their hind legs through 'em an' rough lock themselves down these hills to keep from killin' themselves.'"

There was a salvo of very hearty outdoor laughter at this, and Mr. Antwine stirred behind his newspaper.

"That remins' me of one they use to tell down on the Arkansas line," he said. "There was a feller goin' through there too. He saw a drove o' razorbacks carryin' on mighty queer. There was about twenty o' 'em, an' they acted like they was crazy. They would run fast to one tree an' then to another, tryin' to climb it. Then they would spin aroun' on their noses, crack their tails an' squeal in the most plaintive way you ever heard. The traveler watched them haws fer fifteen minutes, an' the more he saw o' 'em the more they juzzled him. Finally he went on through the woods till he come to a house. There was a man out in front. He was bakin' in the sun. 'Is them your haws up there in the hills?' the stranger asked. 'Yep,' says the native. At that the traveler stepped up an' looked his man in the eye. 'Say,' he said, 'what in the Sam Hill's the matter with them haws?' The native kin' o' half smiled. 'They does act queer, don't they?' he says. 'I should say they does.' 'Waal, it's this a-way,' said the native. 'We had a hail winter in here this time, an' there was no feed in the hills fer them haws. I had to let 'em have corn. Along late in the winter I tuk such a bad col' I couldn't holler pig-o'-wee any more. I had to call 'em up by hittin' the corncrib with an ax handle, an' now,' he says, lookin' back up the hill, 'them dern woodpeckers is settin' 'em crazy.'"

"—St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

## Passing It On.

The clerk filled out the marriage license and handed it over.

"Thank you," said the young man.

"Hold on! That's \$2."

"Two dollars?"

"Yes. Did you suppose we gave those things away?"

"I certainly did. Charging a man \$2 for a sheet of paper that didn't cost the county more than a nickel at the outside is robbery. Have I got to pay it?"

"You'll pay it or you'll hand back that document."

"All right," said the young man, taking a bill out of his pocket, tendering it to the clerk and waiting for his change. "but I can tell you right now you ain't robbin' me. You're robbin' the preacher. He'll get just \$2 less than I was goin' to give him."

Pocketing the change and tilting his hat back on his head, he stalked out of the office with the air of a man who had been imposed upon, but who knew how to get even.—Chicago Tribune.

## The Cat Came Back.

Bacon—Did you ever try to lose a cat?

Egbert—Oh, yes. I hit upon a plan which I thought would work. I wrote a note, inclosing \$10, and tied both about the cat's neck. The note read: "Finder may keep both the cat and the money."

"And how did it work?"

"The cat came back the next day with another note tied to its neck. The note read: 'Don't need the cat, but can use the money. Please send \$10 more.'"

—Yonkers Statesman.

## The Pleasure Site.

Willie—Father, is it true that riches do not bring happiness?

His Pa—Quite true, my son. If you doubt it observe how much more the people in the bleachers seem to enjoy themselves than those in the grand stand.—New York Telegraph.

## Not to Be Fooled Twice.



"Johnnie, keep still and sit down and have your picture taken. Nothing will hurt you."

"Boohoo! That's what you said when we went to the dentist's."

Afterward.

He was not great in any way. He did not do a whole lot. Nor had a helping hand to aid. A luckless creature in his need.

Yet he was released far more than if Mankind was better for his loss. Since, though his way led through the world.

He never bored his fellow men.

—Charlotte Becker in Luck.

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